

Neighborhood Networks

Lessons Learned in Starting and Operating a Neighborhood Networks Center



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Multifamily Housing Programs

www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org
(888) 312-2743

Lessons Learned in Starting and Operating a Neighborhood Networks Center

This publication was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

The guides in this series offer “how to” information on starting a center, creating programs and identifying center partners, marketing and media outreach, sustainability, funding, and much more.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative established by HUD in 1995. Since then, more than 1,000 centers have opened throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These community-learning centers provide residents of HUD insured and assisted properties with programs, activities, and training promoting economic self-sufficiency.

This guide was printed in 2004.

To receive copies of this publication or any others in the series, contact:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Neighborhood Networks
2277 Research Boulevard, 5J
Rockville, MD 20850

Neighborhood Networks Information Center
Toll-free: (888) 312-2743
E-mail: mail@NeighborhoodNetworks.org
TTY: (800) 483-2209

All publications are available from the Neighborhood Networks Web site at ***www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org***.

Table of Contents

Lessons Learned in Starting and Operating a Neighborhood Networks Center	1
Introduction	1
How This Guide Is Organized.....	1
Ten Qualities of Successful Neighborhood Networks Centers	3
Neighborhood Networks Center Profiles.....	5
Wheatland Community Learning Center: Dallas, Texas	5
Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Technology Center: Seattle, WA.....	10
Communities On Line, Inc. Orchard Mews: Baltimore, MD.....	13
The Baltimore Urban League Community Technology Program	15
Neighborhood Revitalization: A Bigger Picture	19
The City of Chattanooga, Tennessee	19
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation: Washington, DC	21
Resources	25
Contact Information for Neighborhood Networks Centers.....	25
Neighborhood Networks Information.....	33

Lessons Learned in Starting and Operating a Neighborhood Networks Center

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development launched Neighborhood Networks in 1995. Today, more than 1,000 centers are operating in HUD insured and assisted housing nationwide. Neighborhood Networks centers are helping low-income people boost their basic skills and find good jobs, learn to use computers and the Internet, operate businesses, improve their health and medical care, and access childcare, transportation, and other services.

This guide shares important information about how to set up and operate a center. It draws from the experiences of Neighborhood Networks centers in several states, as well as other organizations that have special lessons to convey. This guide is designed for property owners and managers who are considering opening centers or are in the process of creating them. Also it may be valuable to established centers looking to adjust or expand their programs.

No two Neighborhood Networks centers are alike. Some are housed in a single room, others use an entire apartment building. Some centers target one primary offering, such as job placement, while others offer an array of programs and services. Some centers have created partnerships with one or two local organization, others have forged multiple institutional alliances. Despite the wide variety, however, nearly all centers encounter similar issues as they develop and grow.

Most often, these issues revolve around deciding on appropriate programs and services, generating financial support, involving residents, building partnerships, hiring staff, and measuring progress.

How This Guide Is Organized

Section one highlights 10 qualities of a successful center. Section two profiles three centers that have developed sustainable partnerships, contributed to residents' education and job prospects, and successfully engaged residents in the centers' planning and programs. The centers profiled are:

- (1) Wheatland Community Learning Center, Dallas, Texas;
- (2) Martin Luther King Jr. Community Learning Center, Seattle, Washington; and
- (3) Communities On Line, Inc. at Orchard Mews, Baltimore, Maryland.

Section three describes two organizations that yield other valuable lessons about what works in neighborhood revitalization. They are:

- (1) City of Chattanooga, Tennessee; and
- (2) Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation.

Section four lists organizations, resources, and contact information that may be helpful in establishing and operating Neighborhood Networks centers.

Ten Qualities of Successful Neighborhood Networks Centers

Profiled in this guide are examples of successful centers. To ensure your center's success, you should:

- (1) **Articulate goals.** The majority of successful centers outline their goals before becoming operational. Sharing these goals with residents and other community organizations kept them focused and earned community support for their mission.
- (2) **Involve residents.** Residents are a good source of information and assistance. Many model centers survey residents to determine their needs before developing programs and services.
- (3) **Rely on resident advisory committees to identify and achieve goals.** Residents who participate in the planning process often volunteer in center activities and increase other residents' willingness to participate.
- (4) **Identify barriers to success and develop solutions.** Development is not a smooth process, and growth often occurs in stages, with the greatest growth occurring when an organization overcomes a hurdle. Every successful center has confronted and overcome challenges.
- (5) **Plan ahead.** The centers profiled spent time planning how to form partnerships, attract residents, and create programs. Planning helped the centers set priorities, link goals to offerings, and find funding.
- (6) **Develop tools to measure progress.** Many of the centers and programs reviewed here developed ways to determine whether or not they are achieving their goals and if those goals will remain relevant over time. Evaluation tools can be simple comparisons of anticipated activities versus actual programs, or they can be complex needs assessment surveys of participants and partners.
- (7) **Tend to funding needs.** Centers need space, staff, equipment, and materials—most of which require funds. Our successful centers raised funds using different strategies—from collecting in-kind donations from partners to tapping property-operating funds to finance programs. Some of these centers researched available resources by way of low-cost brainstorming sessions and walks through the neighborhood to sophisticated Internet searches. Properties with minimal debt had an easier time developing and sustaining a center; however, even troubled properties can work in partnership with a financially sound organization to obtain space and develop programs for a Neighborhood Networks center.
- (8) **Build partnerships.** Although it is time-consuming, partnership building has played a key role in the development and growth of the centers studied. Local organizations are a good source of funding, volunteers, and materials. Partners can also help promote center activities. Conferences with potential partners and national training institutes have helped organizations identify appropriate partners with similar goals. In some cases, finding one or two strong partners is a more effective strategy than trying to enlist multiple smaller partners.
- (9) **Hire the right staff.** Centers can increase participation and decrease costs by hiring staff experienced with computers and other center equipment and who can easily interact with residents.

- (10) **Operate like a business.** A professional approach to record keeping and other operations increases the center's credibility to partners and residents. The centers and programs profiled demonstrate that participants gain valuable, practical experience from a businesslike environment.

Neighborhood Networks Center Profiles

Wheatland Community Learning Center: Dallas, Texas

The Wheatland Community Learning Center, a two-story center in operation since 1996, serves more than 2,000 residents at five Dallas properties. Center staff expect about 400 residents to use the center in 2002–03 to pursue their General Equivalency Degree (GED) and take courses in basic computer competencies, academic and life skills, and business etiquette. Center staff and partners also provide job training and placement services.

Lessons Learned

- Initial resident surveys helped ensure that center activities matched residents' interests.
- Center policies, such as codes of conduct and limited tolerance for absences, gave residents a real-world experience.
- Providing space at the center for partners to operate onsite programs expanded the available offerings and increased residents' use of programs and services.

Background

In the early 1990s, crime and violence plagued Wheatland Terrace and the four neighboring properties. Gangs ruled the streets. Drug dealing, prostitution, and drive-by shootings were common. During this time the Wheatland property management office was torched.

In 1996, the Texas HUD office placed Wheatland Terrace in disposition. Security guards monitored the property around the clock during its renovation, which included the rehabilitation of one building to house a Neighborhood Networks center. While seeking a buyer for the property, HUD issued a request for proposal asking a nonprofit owner to complete the renovation and manage the center. Dean Learning Center, with 50 years of experience in

Dallas, was awarded the contract in October 1996. The Wheatland Community Learning Center began operation soon thereafter.

The 5 multifamily properties served by the center have 1,012 units and 2,530 residents. About 40 percent of the residents are 18 years of age and younger. Forty percent of the adults have not graduated from high school, and half are unemployed. The majority of those who do have jobs are underemployed. Single mothers represent 87 percent of parents in the five buildings. African Americans represent 95 percent of the residents.

Wheatland Community Learning Center

Wheatland's Neighborhood Networks center is housed on the Wheatland Terrace grounds. The first floor includes classrooms, a library, a break room, a community room, and 2 computer labs with 18 terminals. On the second floor are offices and conference rooms. Three full-time employees and one part-time employee work at the center. Classes are offered in 10-week sessions with two intervening weeks for registration. Course offerings include Keyboarding and Introduction to Computers, Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, GED classes, business etiquette, life skills, customer service training, computer training for senior citizens, and two after-school programs. One of the after-school programs for youth is a general purpose tutoring program; the other is Operation ROSE (Reaching Our Sisters Early), a special life-skills, self-esteem, and alternate-careers building program for young women.

The center also provides space for local nonprofits to conduct programs. Operating onsite are Girls, Inc., and the Child and Family Guidance Center which offers counseling and therapy. Other onsite programs include the Latchkey Program and the Dallas Independent School District, which operates GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

Finding Financial Support

The initial HUD proposal required that some of Wheatland Terrace's operating overhead be used to support the Neighborhood Networks center. With minimal property debt, Wheatland Terrace had the resources to help fund the center. During the first 4 months, the center spent \$150,000 for startup and staffing, and \$150,000 each year thereafter for operating costs; equipment; furniture; wiring; telephone; copy machines; fax operations; and supplies for the kitchen, break room, offices, and classes.

Wheatland Community Learning Center continues to explore support from foundations, corporations, and other independent funding sources. The Hillcrest Foundation provided funding to upgrade the center's computer labs, and the Gourmet Award Foods Golf Tournament has targeted proceeds to support the Operation ROSE program.

Determining What to Offer

Lesson: Articulate Goals

The Wheatland Community Learning Center surveyed residents to learn about their needs. The answers helped staff identify program areas. Residents needs included: computer skills, training, childcare, transportation, education, and job assistance.

Wheatland Community Learning Center surveyed residents in person and through the management companies of the five properties that the center serves. Center staff used the survey results to create goals for the center. During the goal-setting process, staff realized that certain programs needed to be in place before others. For example, many residents needed childcare and transportation to participate in center classes or travel to educational programs and jobs. The center's location on a city busline and onsite programs provided by partners solved many of the transportation issues. Childcare, however, proved more challenging.

Lesson: Identify Barriers and Develop Solutions

Wheatland staff identified the lack of childcare as a significant barrier to resident participation. Wheatland overcame this obstacle by creating a partnership with a school that offered free childcare for center participants.

Overcoming the Childcare Obstacle

Bill Dean, the center's first executive director, found the absence of childcare to be a critical barrier to resident participation in center activities. He worked with the nearby South Port School to provide care for residents' children. South Port had existing space and staff in place to handle the children but the school needed a reason to work with Wheatland. Discussions between the center and South Port School focused on the likelihood that parents would continue to use the childcare provider once they found jobs. South Port agreed to provide 25 free spaces for children of residents who participated in center programs. This original arrangement ended as of mid-2002; center staff are now actively seeking a replacement agreement with another local school.

Attracting Partners

With transportation and childcare programs in place, Wheatland staff turned to program development. The center contacted community organizations with programs responding to needs identified in the resident surveys. It hosted a community conference for these groups, thereby attracting the interest of potential partners. Wheatland offered the nonprofit organizations free use of a desk, telephone, and center equipment in exchange for conducting programs at the center. As a result of this conference, residents gained onsite access to educational, social, and vocational programs. Partners had a site to reach targeted audiences, and the center gained volunteer staff and community commitment.

After the conference, many nonprofit organizations posted staff at the center. In addition to Girls, Inc., and the Child and Family Guidance Center, the Dallas Public Library helped organize a library for the center, and film students at Mountain View Community College created a center marketing video.

Partners with staff at the center noticed immediate benefits. A representative from one organization working to help children stay in school felt that having easy access to residents made a big difference. “It’s a lot easier for us because we’re able to work for [residents] in a place where maybe they feel more comfortable,” the staffer said.

The center also has an arrangement with a local college, which provides interns who gain experience by working in the center’s job-referral office.

“Developing partners outside of your immediate community and properties to assist with financial support is very important,” notes center director Kim Williams. “Keep your name out there, and make sure people are aware of what you are doing as an opportunity for them to invest in the community.”

Involving Residents in Real Decisions

The Wheatland center relies on a resident/employer advisory board to help make decisions for the center. The center’s director observed that when residents became involved in the advisory board, participation in center programs increased. Board members learn how to create and use an agenda, how to write bylaws, and how the board’s decisions affect other board members, residents, the property management organization, owners, and the community.

Staff found the following steps contributed to the active participation of resident board members:

- Hold monthly meetings and include significant issues on the agenda;

- Educate board members about their purpose and scope; and
- Provide board members with significant responsibility to make important decisions for the center and its participants.

Every month, staff present issues to board members and suggest possible outcomes of decisions. Board members decide on actions and work with staff to put new policies and programs in place.

Simulating a Real-World Experience

Lesson: Operate Like a Business

Wheatland staff realized that operating the center like a business helped residents adapt to business practices. Residents are accountable for all absences and tardiness. This practice fosters respect for center programs. Good attendance habits help prepare residents for job and education requirements.

The resident board helped Wheatland center staff develop a code of conduct in early 1997. This code encouraged participants to use the center to practice “being in the real world.” For example, participants who arrive late to class are counted absent and encouraged to discontinue the course after a certain number of absences. The code of conduct proved to be an important success factor for residents who responded to center programs with increased respect and seriousness of purpose.

The center requires participants to complete a professional development and life skills class designed and taught by executive director Kim Williams. The course uses a variety of materials, including Steven Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Residents plan personal goals, develop career plans, learn strategies to help budget, manage time effectively, reduce stress, and receive training in customer service and business etiquette.

Establishing Goals

Lesson: Create Tools to Measure Progress

Center staff used information provided from the initial resident surveys to develop goals for the center. By making the goals very specific, the center could evaluate progress at the end of the year. It also created a tool to measure participation.

The center developed annual goals linked to its activities to measure resident and center accomplishments.

Early on, the center measured its progress by a tracking tool called participation opportunities. One participation opportunity occurs when a resident completes a class or center program. Early on, 275 residents used the center and registered about twice as many participation opportunities.

As of 2002, center staff have opted for simpler performance measures, but they continue to set specific targets as well as general program goals. Goals for 2002 included:

- Serve a total of 400 residents;
- Reintroduce GED courses (which had been temporarily suspended);
- Expand evening training opportunities for residents;
- Enhance after-school programming for teens and girls;
- Raise \$26,000 through various fundraising activities;
- Serve at least 150 participants in center programs and special events;
- One hundred graduates of computer training classes;
- Seventy-five children participating in after-school and summer camp programs; and
- Seventy-five individuals employed through job training and placement programs.

Assessing the Benefits

- **Residents.** For residents, participating in a Neighborhood Networks program can be a life changing experience. Both center staff and residents noted this. One resident appreciated the easy access to center activities. "I couldn't learn computers anywhere else except maybe the community college," he said. The proximity of the center to this resident's apartment enabled him to gain valuable skills while spending no more than 2 or 3 hours a day away from his son.
- **Property Owners.** The center helps owners gain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Owners also benefit from its positive effect on residents, which is reflected in better care of the property and an increased ability to pay rent on time. However, Wheatland's center director noted that since its activities are far from the world in which owners operate, some do not recognize the value of Neighborhood Networks centers.
- **Property Managers.** Managers see the center's effect on residents daily. The center collects data on resident participation for each of the five properties it serves and provides it to the property managers. To engage manager interest, Wheatland center staff occasionally holds informal competition among the property managers to determine who can refer the most residents to the center. The winning management teams might receive a prize such as breakfast in their offices prepared by center staff.
- **Partners.** Interacting with the center has helped some partner organizations achieve their own missions. When the center offered office space and easy access to young residents, Communities in Schools dispatched an employee to conduct programs at the site. The nonprofit found that center programs helped residents, while allowing the organization to help more children stay in school.

All organizations involved with the center receive certificates of appreciation. Many of these organizations post the certificates on their walls. The certificates help educate clients and customers about the organization's community outreach and provide free advertising for the center.

- **Community.** The community has experienced marked transformation since the center's creation. Crime is down, a community spirit is prevalent among residents, and property grounds are noticeably cleaner. Center staff intentionally waited to seek support from the broader community until results were evident. The center's director explained that this approach generated support when center programs were in place and showing progress. Early success at the center encouraged other community organizations to get involved in center programs and events.
- **Area Neighborhood Networks Centers.** The center encouraged its partners to get involved with nearby Neighborhood Networks centers. Wheatland staff met with management of other area centers to plan strategies, conduct joint fundraising efforts, and plan shared public relations activities. These meetings enabled cross-center learning and helped smaller centers access the resources available to larger ones. Outreach efforts have flagged in recent years in the face of more pressing program and operational priorities; however, center staff say they are open to re-engaging these activities if there is outside interest and support for them.

Transferability

The Wheatland Community Learning Center was designed to be replicated. Center staff have helped nearby Neighborhood Networks centers incorporate Wheatland's code of conduct, establish policy procedures, and develop forms. Also, they have guided other centers in setting up and processing participant applications for center programs.

Wheatland's ability to use excess operating funds from the apartment complex to support the center is not typical. However, existing and developing centers can use Wheatland's partnership strategies to think beyond their own resources and consider collaborating with organizations in their community. Those owners with extensive deferred maintenance or limited resources can conduct outreach to community organizations for support.

Summary

Staff at the Wheatland Community Learning Center identified the following activities as critical to success.

- Conduct a comprehensive resident survey to understand what residents expect from the center.
- Respond to resident needs directly and through partnerships.
- Create a resident advisory board and allow board members to make all critical center decisions.
- Model the center's structure after the environment in which residents will eventually work.
- Offer programs that challenge residents while requiring a high level of personal commitment and performance.
- Educate participants about center policies and enforce center rules. Establish grievance policies.
- Consider the scale of the center. A center serving 200 residents will need fewer computers, fewer staff, and a smaller space than a center serving 2,000 residents.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Technology Center: Seattle, WA

The Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Community Technology Center serves a 120-unit HUD-assisted multifamily apartment complex on Seattle's south side. The center offers classes in job skills and computer training, GED, and ESL and a wide array of youth activities and study programs. A quote from Winston Churchill on the center's Web site underscores the center's commitment to offering an enriching environment: "We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us."

Lessons Learned

- Hire a central employee with technical and educational skills to serve as the motivating force for participation by partners, donors, and volunteers.
- A successful center can operate with only a few computers.
- Secure adequate funding to cover annual operating expenses.

Background

The Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Apartments management office once averaged three calls to 911 a day, according to Elridge Morgan, the former manager who now directs the center. The center offers a safe haven where residents can learn English, study for degrees, gain employment skills, and receive help applying for jobs. Soon after the center was established, conditions at the complex improved.

The city of Seattle was on the verge of demolishing the MLK Apartments in 1992. That is when the property management collaborated with community partners to renovate the building. New trellises, gabled roofs, wrought iron fencing, playgrounds, and picnic tables contributed to the external renovation, while the new community technology center helped expand work and educational opportunities for residents. The Aerospace Machinists Local District 751 owns the property and Quantum

Management Services helps manage the apartment complex.

In September 1995, Empowerment Through Computers (ETC), a coalition of public and private partners, installed eight computers in a renovated maintenance room. ETC included representatives from nonprofit and for-profit management companies, government housing agencies, and local colleges and universities.

Software programs in math, reading, writing, history, and geography provided online education for a range of age levels. Center staff installed Microsoft Office to help residents enhance business skills, assist with homework, and provide professional desktop publishing of resumes. Internet access allows residents to conduct job searches via the Internet.

Today, a full-time director supervises a coordinator, resident volunteers, and service-learning students from local high schools at the center. More than 25 children and 15 adults use the lab regularly. Participants can take advantage of the center's Earn a Computer program which awards computers to residents who complete specified computer courses taught at the center. Volunteers also are eligible to earn a computer after completing participation in center activities.

Securing Financial Support

Quantum Management Services received \$5.9 million from HUD to renovate the complex. The managers used \$25,000 of this grant to purchase equipment, furniture, computers, and software for the community technology center. The property managers have included the center's ongoing costs in the property's operating budget and estimate the annual costs at \$45,000. The budget includes expenses for two full-time staff, software, hardware upgrades, center utilities, and occasional maintenance. The center relies on the technician skills of center director Eldridge Morgan to maintain and repair computers.

Lesson: Hire the Right Staff

A key employee, such as a property manager, who is familiar with resident issues can play a critical role early in the process of developing a center. At some point, the center may consider asking staff to work full time on center activities. When the demands of a growing center required a full-time commitment at MLK, the property manager became the center director and gave up his management duties.

The MLK center director serves double duty as a technical computer expert. He has helped save the center money by identifying computer needs and repairing computers.

One difficulty in relying heavily upon the skills, expertise and passion of a key individual is that he or she may become overburdened and overwhelmed. Centers or managers who find themselves in this position might benefit by consciously planning for backup. This might mean identifying each component of critical staff's skills and duties, and identifying, training, or hiring another staff member to perform them when needed.

Planning the Center

Eldridge Morgan's passion, vision, technical expertise, and strong relationships with residents underlie the MLK computer center's success. Unlike the two other centers profiled in this guide, MLK did not rely on resident surveys to determine center goals. Instead, the Seattle center launched programs after only a brief planning period. At times, center development progressed in a keep-trying-until-it-works fashion. In April 1998, Morgan received the William H. Lucy Award from the Coalition of Black Trade Unions (CBTU) for meritorious service in the area of community service. When the center opened its doors in 1995, Morgan initially served double duty as property manager and center director. He found, however, that he often had to sacrifice one set of duties to accomplish the other. When the management company offered him a choice in 1996, Morgan opted for center director.

Now, in 2002, after the departure of the previous property manager, Morgan has had to once again assume those duties in addition to directing the center. He is very busy, feels overwhelmed, and is looking to recruit a new director for the center, as soon as a qualified individual can be located.

Benefits

- **Residents.** The center averages two job placements a month. Five families used the center's classes and Internet job searches to find jobs with high enough salaries to move out of Section 8 housing and into market rent apartments. Other residents are making enough money to buy homes.
- **Property Owners.** The Aerospace Machinists Union notes that in addition to preventing demolition of the apartments, the renovation and the center's opening have reduced crime and drug proliferation. Once at 50 percent occupancy during the renovation, the property now has a 5-year waiting period for units. The community technology center serves as an amenity, much like apartment tennis courts or swimming pools.
- **Property Managers.** As a result of the successful turnaround of the MLK Apartments, the city of Seattle invited the property managers to manage a city-owned housing complex as well. The Seattle Police Department advocated for this unusual request.
- **Partners.** Partners ranging from a supermarket chain to a basketball team have supported the center through in-kind donations, volunteers, and services. In return, the MLK Community Technology Center publishes the partner organizations' logos on the center's Web site.
- **Community.** According to center director Morgan, the center has helped to "bring the community closer together." For example, residents once feared police more than drug

dealers; now many residents participate in a neighborhood block watch.

Lessons Learned

The MLK center experience is an interesting example in that some features of its startup and operation appear to contradict the conventional prescriptions for pre-planning and information collection. Nevertheless, the center has been highly successful for many years. This may be an illustration of the fact that every center and property's situation is unique in some way, and that successful centers almost always have to develop flexible, creative solutions to their own particular challenges. There is no one off-the-shelf model that can be applied to fit every situation.

Also, note that although the center has taken an experimental "see what works" approach to development, director Morgan's conclusions about seeking resident input, maintaining regulations, and record-keeping (below) indicate a careful and attentive approach to managing for good results.

- **Don't overplan! Experiment.** You can open a computer lab with one computer. You don't have to wait until you have top-of-the-line equipment.

As Eldridge Morgan puts it: "Whatever you have, do it. Don't hesitate to start—if you don't start, you can't finish."

For program development, he says, "Talk to the people that come in. Ask them, 'What do you need?' Some people came in with new stuff, new ideas and needs we hadn't thought of. We asked what they needed. That's the whole thing."

- **Be firm with rules and regulations.** If you make an exception for one person, others will demand the same. This is especially critical when an organization receives federal funds and must abide by regulations that prohibit discrimination.

- **Keep logs and track daily maintenance of computers.** Not only will details become overwhelming without daily checks and balances, but computers will not operate properly without appropriate maintenance.

Transferability

The MLK Center has served as a prototype for other centers in the Seattle metropolitan area. Morgan helped nearby Royal Hills in Renton secure an Internet account with Northwest Links, whose server MLK uses. A Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) volunteer at MLK helped set up a Neighborhood Networks center at the Chateau Apartments. The center's ESL teacher helped develop an ESL program at Bryant Manor and soon became an ESL instructor at the nearby center. Morgan cautioned that security issues can prevent effective replication. He suggests that centers post security guards near the property's main entrance and use some form of security lighting system in the complex. These actions can help diminish vandalism and robbery.

Security costs at the center were running about \$10,000 per month. In order to reduce costs, the center director now personally provides security 2–3 hours a night. The center and property are protected by security gates with a guard shack and video monitor, which also reduce security personnel costs.

Sustainability

The center was awarded an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer to identify needs, procure center resources, and build partnerships to promote sustainability. By developing a database of contacts, meeting with potential partners, and consistently following up with contacts, the volunteer helped establish partnerships with organizations ranging from the 7-Eleven convenience store to the Seattle Mariners. He used the center's PowerPoint software to create a slide presentation as a marketing aid when meeting with potential partners. He also developed a brochure highlighting center successes.

Today, in 2002, AmeriCorps has run out of funding, however, the former VISTA volunteer continues to help out on a part-time voluntary basis.

Success can also present sustainability problems. Director Morgan finds it difficult to maintain a sufficient number of daytime parent volunteers because they tend to find paid jobs and move on. “This is a good problem to have,” he notes, “we want to be a stepping stone, not a rut.”

Summary

The MLK Community Technology Center is a national model largely because of the passion and vision of the center director.

- Focus staff to work on specific areas that include fundraising, instruction, and resident and community outreach.
- Build a volunteer base from former partner organizations, residents, and government programs such as VISTA and AmeriCorps.
- Use incentives such as Earn-Your-Own-Computer awards for completed assignments.
- Incorporate programs that respond to residents’ needs. MLK created an ESL class in response to the property’s large immigrant population, which is 60 percent Somali.
- Develop a database of existing donors and look for ways to involve them in center activities.
- Continually seek new donors and partners.

Communities On Line, Inc. Orchard Mews: Baltimore, MD

Communities On Line, Inc. was set up to serve Orchard Mews, a 101-unit HUD-assisted property; McCullough Homes, a public housing complex with 1,000 units; and Work Focus 2000, a welfare-to-work program of the Baltimore Urban League (BUL). Other community members could access the center’s services for a minimal fee. The center would provide classes in computer literacy and later include classes in Microsoft Word and Excel. The organization was assigned to BUL’s help desk troubleshooting computer technology department. Orchard Mews employs a part-time substance abuse counselor and a full-time nurse to assist with residents’ health needs. The property received a 1998 John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Best Practice Award from HUD for its healthcare demonstration program.

However, despite careful planning, highly successful programming, very positive community response, and many individual successes, Communities On Line was forced to close its center due to an unexpected funding gap. BUL, owners of the building housing the center and most of the equipment, was able to secure funding and to continue and expand the center’s operation and programs. The center, now called the Baltimore Urban League Community Technology Program, continues to operate successfully, providing service to over 1,000 participants a year from Orchard Mews, McCullough Homes, and the larger community.

Lessons Learned

- Take time to plan programs for the center.
- Involve partners and residents in the planning process.
- Cultivate at least one strong partnership. Plan far in advance for funding support, and be prepared for funding changes. Strong support and involvement of residents, partners, and community members can help your center through tough times.

Background

In 1995, Angela Wickham, the property manager at Orchard Mews, began exploring ways to help residents develop competitive job skills. She met with Charles Wilson, HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator for Maryland, who encouraged her to consider opening a Neighborhood Networks center at Orchard Mews. During the next 2 years, Wickham attended Neighborhood Networks seminars, visited properties with centers, and along with Wilson, began speaking to potential partners.

Lacking financial resources and space for a center, Wickham reached out to the BUL because they owned the building that housed Apartment Investment and Management Company, Orchard Mews' property management company. The BUL and its executive director, Roger Lyons, offered early and ongoing support for the center.

Invitations were extended to representatives from Baltimore's City Housing Authority, owners of McCullough Homes, Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), and Reverend Groves, pastor of the Canaan Baptist Church, to participate in the center planning process. Each played an important role in developing Communities On Line.

Lesson: Planning is Key

Communities On Line, Inc. met weekly to plan programs with residents, managers, HUD staff, and partners.

With partners in place, Communities On Line broadened the planning process by distributing meeting flyers to residents and other community members. A core group of residents met at the BUL with property managers, partners, and HUD staff on a weekly basis to develop programs, determine staffing, outline lesson plans, and create curricula.

Communities On Line, Inc.

Both of the properties served by the Communities On Line computer center

are located near downtown Baltimore, in an area characterized by low-income housing, low- to moderate-market rents, and above-average crime rates.

Lesson: Partnerships Help Center Grow

Communities On Line received computers and other equipment through its partnership with the BUL. Funds from an Urban League grant helped purchase new computers for the center to supplement those initially donated by HUD. Partners continue to support the center.

The computer center occupies one room of the BUL building. One full-time Urban League employee assists with curriculum development and classroom instruction. Resident volunteers help with all other center tasks, which include answering telephone calls, registering class participants, purchasing supplies, tutoring, and answering correspondence.

The center held its grand opening in August 1997 and began offering computer classes in April 1998. The center offered two computer classes—one during the day and a second in the evening—in 1998, as well as an open computer lab between classes for participants to practice. Class sessions ran for 4 weeks.

The resident advisory group participated in the first pilot course. The group's feedback helped the paid Urban League instructor adjust the course to meet residents' needs. Partners and residents used the interim period after the pilot course to develop programs, create class curricula, and conduct outreach.

Raising Financial and Other Supports

The BUL provides many in-kind donations to Communities On Line, including state-of-the-art computer room, materials, and one employee to staff the center. To minimize administrative costs, the center opened classes to the community for a fee of \$25 per class. These fees help pay for center items such as computer disks, paper, and class folders.

Communities On Line worked to achieve 501(c)3 nonprofit status, then applied for and

won a \$200,000 2-year operational support grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC). The center also won a \$50,000 corporate grant from Bell Atlantic (now the Verizon Foundation).

Identifying Resident Needs

Lesson: Resident Involvement Plays Important Role

Communities On Line, Inc. benefited from initial surveys identifying the level of resident computer knowledge. Surveys revealed that residents had basic computer literacy needs that included keyboard use and running office and educational software. The center used survey results to establish goals for the center that helped increase residents' comfort level with computers.

In addition to holding community meetings, the Communities On Line organizing committee conducted resident surveys. At Orchard Mews, this entailed going door-to-door and speaking with residents. Because of the large number of residents at McCullough Homes, a mail-in survey assessed residents' experience with computers and interest in the center. The organizing committee used the surveys to establish goals to expand computer literacy, to provide education, advocacy, and job training to center clients, and to increase participant involvement in community activities.

The Baltimore Urban League Community Technology Program

Because its original DOC operating grant was for only 2 years, Communities On Line, Inc. and the BUL applied for a 3-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to continue operations. However, this funding did not come through at the time it was expected, DOC funding ran out, and the center was forced to close in 2001.

Within a few months, the DOE did award a \$675,000 3-year grant to continue center operation. The new grant included funding to hire staff to fill positions and perform work that previously had all been done by volunteer

residents. The former volunteer staffers and leaders of Communities On Line had become so highly skilled, however, that during the interim they were offered and accepted paid lead staff positions at other housing programs' Neighborhood Networks centers.

BUL hired other residents to fill the staff positions. Under the circumstances, it was decided not to continue with the Communities On Line center name, and the center was renamed the Baltimore Urban League Community Technology Program.

The new program essentially continues the model, goals, and outreach and marketing efforts of Communities On Line, according to Michael Smith, who was the BUL director of technology for the old center and is currently the center director. "The biggest change is in the type and quality of service. Our scope of service has expanded 1000 percent."

To Communities On Line's computer literacy training, the new center has added onsite Microsoft A+ and M.O.U.S.E. technical certification, and Cisco Corporation and Web designer training. For youth, the center offers PowerUp programming, and summer camp with courses, in robotics, music and video engineering, PC repair, and Microsoft PowerPoint presentations.

The detailed, in depth curriculum attracts a broad range of users from inside and outside the Orchard Mews and McCullough Homes communities, including professionals seeking the industry-standard certifications. All programming is free to residents of the two properties; outside users pay a fee that helps support the center's programs. "We've reached the point where, through our community's efforts, we now actually serve more people outside our community," Smith notes.

"Under the new staffing model, with paid staff hired by the BUL, the center does not get quite as much resident input as it did when it was all staffed and run by resident volunteers," Smith says. However, the success, scope and direction of the current program would not have been

possible without the groundwork built by the residents' organization.

"The Communities On Line story is extremely important," he says. "Without that effort and energy from the community, this would never have taken off the way it did. They did absolutely everything to get it to work—they caused it to be put on the map. The resident organizers were the first to go through the classes. For a center and its programs to be really vital, it's important to start with the community—not just at the table, but as a part of the decision-making process."

Benefits

- **Residents.** The center's first two computer classes have been at capacity and residents have taken ownership of the center. Resident association members help interview and train center volunteers, assist with class development, respond to onsite and telephone inquiries, conduct registrations, and tutor students. Under the guidance of the BUL's director of technology, the residents have upgraded the computers used by Urban League staff, which asked Communities On Line participants to redesign the BUL Web site.
- **Property Owners and Managers.** As one of the primary initiators of the center, Orchard Mews property manager Angela Wickham has played an important role in the success of the center. She and the property owners have benefited from residents' enthusiasm for center programs and from area organizations that have become involved in center activities.
- **Partners.** The center has helped unite and foster relationships with many community organizations around similar issues. Wickham noted that local organizations are beginning to work together to solve a range of community problems.
- **Community.** Many community groups participated in a city parade along Druid Hill Avenue to celebrate the center's grand opening. Marching bands joined area

organizations, residents, elected officials, HUD officials, a church choir, and singing groups. The city provided a fire truck and staff to assist with parade logistics. Community members have been taking advantage of the center's computer classes, which are available to them for a minimal fee.

Lessons Learned

- Hold regular meetings of a core group of residents, partners, center volunteers and staff to learn about ongoing center issues. Determine solutions and assess the daily impact of bylaws, policies, and programs on participants.
- Ensure residents are involved and supporting center activities.
- Allow time to plan. After 2 years of planning, the Communities On Line center became operational.
- Set clear center goals and focus on those goals daily.
- Beware of unpredictable or unexpected funding changes. Plan far ahead, and diversify support as much as possible. Strong resident, community, and partner involvement may carry a program through a funding failure.
- Success may lead to changes—don't be afraid to be flexible. A staff-led model may supplant a resident-led one when a center achieves a certain level of size and program complexity. This change may be more successful and less risky where there is already a strong base of resident support and involvement.

Transferability

Existing and newly developing centers can follow many of the Communities On Line center's planning activities. Wickham suggests that centers begin by involving their best resource—residents—in the process. "Do not make the mistake of thinking for them or calling

all the shots and asking later, ‘What do you think?’” she says.

Centers may benefit from enlisting one or two effective partners, such as the alliance with Communities On Line. Such partnerships require time and hard work. Communities On Line first researched the missions of local organizations to find a good match. Then, staff contacted the leaders of potential partner organizations to arrange meetings. These meetings explored whether the goals of the organization matched the center’s goals. Since resident participation is an important part of Neighborhood Networks, centers may ask whether partners will allow residents to take the initiative in projects. Organizations that work on an equal level with residents help residents and partner organizations learn from each other.

Choose partners carefully—quality is often more important than quantity. Ask the following question: What can the center offer this partner in return for the partner’s services or products?

For example, children at Orchard Mews and McCullough Homes can attend the BUL’s summer math and science lab at no cost and older residents are invited to participate in special Urban League presentations and seminars.

In this case, the partner was critical in carrying forward the center program, and in taking it to a higher level of community service. It was also important that the partner, the BUL, was willing to provide strong support from the very beginning of the center’s development, while being sensitive to and respectful of the need for real resident involvement in the development and operation of the center

Summary

The strength of Communities On Line, Inc. is its strong collaborative efforts involving Orchard Mews Apartments and McCullough Homes. The center focuses on expanding computer technology. Orchard Mews supplements this training with additional resident programs, including onsite healthcare and entrepreneurial training. Involve all members of the community in the center planning process. Collaborative efforts help increase attendance at center events and classes. Allow time for democratic planning processes. Consensus building can require weeks and months of meetings before the center is operational. Analyze residents’ needs and required resources before seeking funding or space. Smaller spaces are soon outgrown. Consider creating a slightly larger center than intended to allow for future growth. Always address the basics in any center class. For example, computer classes should include lessons in using the keyboard and the mouse.

Neighborhood Revitalization: A Bigger Picture

The city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation offer valuable lessons that may be useful in helping Neighborhood Networks centers anchor their communities' renewal.

Chattanooga's story is about how residents can transform their community by working together to overcome the same challenges that face HUD insured and assisted apartment properties. The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation story illustrates how a strong national partner can give a substantial boost to community-based organizations like Neighborhood Networks centers.

The City of Chattanooga, Tennessee

A decade ago, Chattanooga—population 150,000—faced the common litany of urban problems, including crime, unemployment, the out migration of jobs, and a shortage of quality affordable housing. Chattanooga residents responded by organizing task forces and small committees to revitalize the city. Their efforts helped Chattanooga become internationally recognized as one of the most improved cities in the 1990s.

Lesson Learned

- Broad public participation helps identify a wide range of issues and increases creativity in problem solving.
- Structured committees can accomplish more than individuals working alone.
- Ongoing reassessment of priorities provides focus and keeps programs on track.

Background

To address increasing crime and unemployment, Chattanooga citizens formed a nonprofit organization in the 1980s that operated somewhat like a Neighborhood Networks center. That nonprofit, Chattanooga Venture, expanded community involvement in city issues and gave the city a voice and a vision.

The first step to get the city on track was to create Vision 2000. Similar in content to the mission statement of many Neighborhood Networks centers, this vision helped residents maintain a disciplined focus on the most important issues, especially affordable housing and jobs.

Lesson: Articulate Goals

Chattanooga residents helped the city identify neighborhood goals, raise money for projects, and support activities through volunteering.

Chattanooga Venture staff encouraged residents to participate in goal-setting meetings across the city. More than 1,700 people attended public meetings during this 5-month process. The high level of participation revealed residents' strong interest in developing solutions to community problems. Participants identified 40 goals to revitalize the city, which included mitigating family violence, renovating historic buildings and cultural attractions, increasing affordable housing, and cleaning up the downtown riverfront.

The residents who identified the city's goals began working in small groups to achieve these objectives. One task force raised \$500,000 from private and public organizations to open a Family Violence Shelter for battered women

and their children. Another group raised seed money for a \$6 million renovation of the historic Tivoli Theater. The restoration of a local bridge, now the world's longest footbridge, helped bring pedestrian traffic downtown. The city developed and rehabilitated more than 3,000 affordable housing units.

Lesson: Funding is Critical

Chattanooga residents found that little money from the city could be a down payment on projects and that outreach to local organizations generated contributions to cover the expenses of community projects.

Just as Neighborhood Networks centers invest a small amount of money in center programs and encourage local organizations to contribute the remaining funds, the city of Chattanooga invested a small amount to accomplish its goals. Nonprofit and for-profit organizations donated additional funds. Chattanooga Venture noted that “for every dollar spent by the public sector, the private sector invested three dollars” on Vision 2000 activities.¹

Getting Results for Chattanooga

Lesson: Involve Residents on Committees

Residents worked together in small groups to determine projects, identify funding and secure volunteers. Residents offered a neighborhood perspective on whether or not plans could succeed.

Chattanooga Venture found that people can effectively address issues when they meet in structured groups. Chattanooga Venture helped residents work in small groups to accomplish goals identified in Vision 2000. The task forces and steering committees identified what would be needed to ensure their projects could succeed and then decided whether or not to proceed, expand the project's scope or move in a different direction. Taking time to think through a project in advance saved time and money. The

¹ *Revision 2000: Take Charge Again*, Revision 2000 magazine designed and produced by Gianni Longo of Urban Initiatives.

groups determined whether they could find financial and volunteer support to achieve their goals and then decided to create an organization to perform the work. The newly created organizations identified appropriate office space and began to recruit volunteers. Chattanooga Venture continued to provide assistance through each stage of development.

Staying on Track

Chattanooga Venture required time and long-term commitments from participants. Goal setting took 5 months and many more meetings were required for groups to decide how to accomplish the goals and secure resources and volunteers. Once resources were in place to restore Chattanooga, work progressed slowly, particularly on activities such as restoration of homes and historic buildings.

To help stay on track, the city decided to evaluate its success. In 1993, more than 2,600 residents offered suggestions to issues in five areas: work, government, places, people, and play. Each goal included activities to achieve that objective. For example, listed under the goal of creating a vibrant downtown were activities such as establishing a public market for farmers, artists, and craft vendors; developing an incentive fund to encourage downtown businesses to renovate buildings and improve landscaping; and extending the city shuttle system to the downtown area.²

Earning Global Honors

Chattanooga's willingness to involve residents in new ways to improve their city earned the city national and global honors. In 1996, the Together Foundation and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements selected Chattanooga as one of 12 global recipients of the Award Winning Practices in Urban Issues. The jury highlighted three areas in which the city excelled: technology, economic development, and environmental management. The Environmental Best Manufacturing Practices program honored the city of

² *Community with a Vision: Revision 2000*, Brochure, May 20, 1993, conceived by Urban Initiatives.

Chattanooga for promoting exceptional practices, methods and procedures in planning, production, facilities, and management. HUD also recognized the city's transformation in a publication addressing strategies for community change.³ Popular media such as *US News and World Report* (June 15, 1998) also publicized the story of the comeback city.

Summary

Chattanooga's community transformation offers lessons for community groups planning change.

- Take time to develop a vision.
- Involve the community in decision-making.
- Start with many ideas, then compress them to a few broad priorities.
- Identify actions that can help achieve goals.
- Prepare and share a report in the process of identifying goals and implementing programs.
- Create small groups to raise funds and identify steps to achieve each goal.
- Reassess priorities periodically.
- Provide progress reports to the public on achievements.

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation: Washington, DC

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation is a national nonprofit organization that helps revitalize low-income communities and provide affordable housing for residents. To accomplish this mission, the corporation founded a national network of community-based organizations that work in partnership with residents, businesses, government officials, and other organizations to create healthy communities. These local member organizations resemble Neighborhood Networks centers in many respects. Through national and local partnerships, the corporation has helped expand housing and economic development in communities across the country for two decades.

³ *VISION/REALITY: Strategies for Community Change*, HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD-1449-CPR, March 1994, p. 56.

Lessons Learned

- Clarify the goals of the organization before providing services or products.
- Link goals to resources and proceed according to available resources.
- Form a board and encourage members to take ownership of the organization.

Background

Congress established the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation in 1978 to revive low-income communities and provide affordable housing. The community groups that have joined the corporation's network are called NeighborWorks®, operating in communities throughout the United States. Based in Washington, D.C., with staff in nine district offices across the country, the corporation provides training, technical assistance, and some seed funding to member organizations. Network organizations can apply for small grants from the corporation that often are matched by local governments, businesses, and foundations.

The corporation receives annual funding from Congress and receives additional support from foundations with programs at member organization sites.

Lesson: Funding is Critical

NeighborWorks® organizations rely on seed money from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and donations from local government, businesses, and community groups. Local organizations sign financial agreements with partners to ensure funding is ongoing.

At the local level, the corporation works with a city or a group of organizations to help defray the costs of starting a NeighborWorks® group. The corporation commits up to \$100,000. This seed money helps fund a local development coordinator and all costs associated with four or five area-wide strategic planning workshops that result in the creation of a nonprofit organization. Total startup financing on the local level can average between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

Diverse Boards Are Key To Success

The corporation encourages member organizations to create resident-led governing boards that include community residents and representatives from government agencies, businesses, and community organizations.

Lesson: Advisory Committees Help Identify and Achieve Goals

NeighborWorks® groups form advisory boards with residents, government representatives, and local businesses, or community groups. Board members rely on their professional knowledge and networks to find funding and volunteers.

These local boards identify priorities and resources, including grants and loans from financial institutions, foundations, and other private sources. Public support includes Community Development Block Grant money from HUD and funding from cities and states. In some cases, local government funding for streets and parks helps support neighborhood revitalization.

NeighborWorks® groups work closely with community organizations. Board members rely on their personal and professional networks, as well as research on community assets, to develop partnerships. Partner organizations provide funding, volunteers, and resources. NeighborWorks® groups also conduct outreach to residents in the community. Some groups request community volunteers for a neighborhood cleanup day; others form committees or hold block-club meetings to discuss timely issues.

Benefits

- **Community.** The network has stimulated community reinvestment of more than \$1.8 billion and helped over 83,000 low-income families purchase or improve their homes.
- **Partners.** Local partners have benefited through increased property values and expanded local economies. National partners have benefited from community development and leadership skills gained

from national and local training institutes, publications, and other technical assistance materials.

- **NeighborWorks® organizations.** The corporation's annual training institutes and technical assistance resources have enabled local organizations to respond to community housing and development needs. Many groups are now more effective and able to provide greater resources to both partner organizations and residents.

Lessons Learned

George Knight, executive director of Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, offers the following suggestions to help growing organizations:

- Clearly define the group's goals at the outset. Ensure these goals are achievable and within the organization's resources.
- Use appropriate tools to measure progress. For example, the number of new mortgages is a more compelling measurement of success than the number of residents who receive homebuyer counseling.
- Encourage the board of directors, at national and local levels, to exercise ownership of the organization. This group can be a critical source of ideas, funding, and partnership opportunities.
- Spend time and resources hiring staff who will help the organization grow.
- Operate in a businesslike manner, whether or not you make a profit.

"Most new organizations attempt to do too much with too few resources," Knight says. The steps to success are not complicated but require work. Many organizations fall short of their goals when they seek short cuts and avoid follow through. To increase success, newly developing organizations should design a strategic plan with clear objectives, defining

who is responsible for each objective and establishing tools to measure success.

Transferability and Sustainability

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation has successfully replicated NeighborWorks® organizations across the country for more than 20 years. Knight attributes much of the corporation's success to clarity around the organization's goals. The path to achieving these goals can vary widely from organization to organization depending on local needs and resources. In addition to training local organizations in how to structure and govern themselves and raise resources, the corporation helps troubleshoot during crisis situations.

Summary

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation has helped increase lending to distressed communities across the country through training, technical assistance, and funding of local community-based organizations. The following highlights factors contributing to success.

- Individuals and organizations that are most affected by community actions should be involved in identifying issues and planning activities.
- A partnership of residents and representatives from the private and public sectors ensures that organizations address a range of needs from diverse perspectives and resources.
- Devise methods to evaluate all issues important to the organization. That which is not measured is often not perceived as important.
- Develop evaluation systems early—optimally when creating the organization.

Resources

Contact Information for Neighborhood Networks Centers

Wheatland Community Learning Center

Contact: Kim Williams, Executive Director
8157 Leigh Ann Drive
Dallas, TX 75232
Phone: (972) 224-5243
Fax: (972) 442-9721

Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Technology Center

Contact: Elridge Morgan, Director
7923 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South
Seattle, WA 98118-4344
Phone: (206) 722-4665
Fax: (206) 723-6514
Web site: www.nwlink.com/~mlkapt

Communities On Line, Inc.

Contact: Angela Wickham,
Director, Orchard Mews
514 Orchard Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: (410) 523-2021
Fax: (410) 728-1507

Neighborhood Networks Information Center

The Neighborhood Networks Information Center provides direct technical assistance to Neighborhood Networks centers. A range of publications and materials are available free for reference or downloading on the Neighborhood Networks Web site, www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Many publications are also available in printed format. Call the Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743 or TTY (800) 483-2209, to request assistance or publications, or to find out what printed materials are available.

Resources include:

- **Technical Assistance Guides.** The guides, newly updated in 2002, provide detailed information for property owners and managers, center staff, residents, and partners on a variety of topics relating to starting and operating a center. (This publication for example.)
- **The Strategic Tracking and Assessment Tool (START).** This online tool for developing and updating business plans will assist you with one of the most critical elements in developing a successful center. START performs calculations and provides estimates to help you plan your program. At the end of the START process, your center will have a document to guide it through the development phase and as it begins operations.
- **Network News (formerly Neighborhood Networks News Brief)—(current and limited past issues).** A quarterly newsletter distributed to the public, HUD field offices, and Neighborhood Networks centers.
- **NNewsline (current and limited past issues).** A quarterly newsletter highlighting topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks coordinators and centers.
- **Online List of Current Neighborhood Networks Centers.** The list, searchable by state or by center name, provides center and property name, city, and contact information.

- **Fact Sheets.** Fact sheets are one-page documents on a variety of topics, including an overview of the initiative and telehealth programs at Neighborhood Networks centers.
- **Success Stories.** Brief overviews of successful activities at Neighborhood Networks centers across the country are posted online and kept in a searchable archive.
- Government consultants who work directly with nonprofit leaders to design specialized solutions to meet an organization's needs.
- Tools on nonprofit governance, including more than 100 booklets, books, videos, CDs, and audiotapes.
- An annual conference that brings together approximately 800 board members and chief executives of nonprofit organizations from around the world.

Organizations

These organizations provide useful resources for those interested in establishing or growing a Neighborhood Networks center.

Accountants for the Public Interest (API)

University of Baltimore, Thurnel Business Center, Room 155, 1420 North Charles Street, BC519, Baltimore, MD 21201

Phone: (410) 837-6533

Fax: (410) 837-6532

Web site: www.accountingnet.com/asso/api.

API is a national network of affiliates through which accountants volunteer their expertise to nonprofit organizations, small businesses, and individuals who cannot afford professional accounting services. API publishes a series of user-friendly guides for nonprofits on financial topics.

BoardSource (formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards)

1828 L Street, NW, Suite 900

Washington, DC 20036-5114

Phone: (202) 452-6262 or (800) 883-6262

Fax: (202) 452-6299

Web site: www.boardsource.org.

BoardSource is a resource for practical information, tools and best practices, training, and leadership development for board members of nonprofit organizations worldwide. It enables organizations to fulfill their missions by helping build strong and effective nonprofit boards by providing:

- Resources to nonprofit leaders through workshops, training, and an extensive Web site at www.boardsource.org.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

409 Third Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20416,

Phone: (800) U-ASK-SBA or (800) 827-5722

Fax: (202) 205-7064 TDD: (704) 344-6640

Web site: www.sba.gov.

The SBA provides programs and services to help small businesses develop and grow. SBA offers business counseling and training through a service corps of retired executives (www.score.org) and small business development centers across the country. SBA also conducts Tribal Business Information Centers on Native American reservations and the online women's business center (www.onlinewbc.org) for women who own small businesses.

Publications

Ask and You Shall Receive: A Fundraising Training Program for Religious Organizations and Projects. Klein, Kim. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/jbask.html.

Assessing Your Organization's Finances: A Guide to Using and Understanding Financial Reports. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- The process of reviewing an organization's financial statements to understand its fiscal and operational positions and trends—commonly used by corporate analysts—can be adapted for nonprofit community development organizations. It is designed for the staff and board of nonprofit community development organizations,

government agencies, technical assistance providers, and partners who support them.

Board Basics: A Primer for Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Explains the fundamental structure, roles, and responsibilities of a board in governing a nonprofit organization. Offers an overview of legal duties and financial oversight, in addition to the stages of board development.

The Board of Directors. Grassroots Fundraising Journal Reprint Collection. Roth, Stephanie, and Kim Klein. Web citation: <http://grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/pubs.htm>.

- An organization's board of directors is the key to successful fundraising. These articles show how to develop an effective board of directors who are willing and able to raise money. Topics covered include running effective meetings, recruiting better board members, getting the board to raise money, and more.

Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations (Jossey-Bass Nonprofit Sector Series). Carver, John. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Building and Managing a Better Board: An In-Depth Workbook for Board Members and Executive Directors of Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Helps boards of nonprofits develop a common understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Group exercises on topics such as mission, vision, activities and values statements, stages of board development, and board roles, are included.

Building Community-Based Boards. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Designed to help new and potential board members understand the critical role they play in the success of the organization. It will help boards of community-based organizations better understand and carry out their responsibilities.

Como Recaudar Fondos en su Comunidad (How to Raise Money in Your Community). Grassroots Fundraising Journal Reprint Collection. Translated by Norma Del Rio. Articles by Klein, Kim, Stephanie Roth, Maria Bonzales, Dave Fleischer, and Lucy Grugett. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/pubs.html.

- An introduction to the most common and successful nonprofit fundraising strategies in 14 of the best articles from the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*. Small organizations can put these strategies to use immediately, whether or not they have paid staff or have done fundraising before. These strategies do not require a lot of money upfront, technical knowledge, or expensive equipment such as computers or elaborate databases. (In Spanish only.)

The Complete Book of Model Fundraising Letters. Kuniholm, Roland. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Creating a Budget That Works: A Self-Guided Training Handbook for Nonprofit Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Budgets are the financial workplans for projects, programs, and organizations. Budgets that work are based on realistic assumptions, use good cost estimates, and come from organizational processes that include board and staff members. Designed for board and staff of nonprofit community development organizations.

Developing Realistic Cash Flow Projections: Forecasting When Money Will Be Received and Spent at Your Nonprofit. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Contains detailed descriptions of expected future inflows and outflows of cash into a project, program, or organization are important tools in good operational and fiscal management systems. Examples and exercises help the user develop projections for single-family housing development, nonprofit property management, and supportive housing programs.

Evaluating Your Executive Director: A Guide for Boards of Nonprofit Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Shows nonprofit boards how to establish an objective evaluation process of their executive director. Explains who should conduct the evaluation, how to develop performance standards, and how to prepare and present the evaluation.

Finding Funding: The Comprehensive Guide to Grant Writing (2002). Barber, Daniel M. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Fundraising for Dummies. Mutz, John, and Katherine Murray; Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Fundraising for Social Change, Fourth edition, rev. and expanded. Klein, Kim. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/principles.html.

Fundraising for the Long Haul (New Companion to Fundraising for Social Change). Klein, Kim. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/flh_press.html.

Getting Major Gifts, third edition, rev. 2000. Grassroots Fundraising Journal Reprint Collection. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/gifts.html.

- In a healthy nonprofit organization, 60 percent of the money comes from 10 percent of the donors. How to develop a major gifts program—putting the most lucrative fundraising strategy within reach of small nonprofits.

Grant Writing for Dummies. Browning, Beverly A. Web citation: www.amazon.com

Grantmakers Directory (2000-2001 Edition). Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org.

- Grantseeking bible for progressive fundraisers; info on more than 200 grantmakers. Information on more than 200 social-change grantmakers; tool kit for writing effective proposals, developing fundraising strategies, and finding internet resources; specifics on contacts, guidelines, grant sizes, and areas of interest; indexing by program/issue areas, geography, and target populations

Grassroots Grants An Activist's Guide to Proposal Writing. Robinson, Andy. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/gr_grants.html.

How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation: With Forms. Warda, Mark. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters. Warwick, Mal. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

I'll Grant You That: A Step-By-Step Guide to Finding Funds, Designing Winning Projects, and Writing Powerful Proposals. Burke, Jim, and Carol Ann Prater. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

John Carver on Board Leadership. Carver, John, and Sir Adrian Cadbury. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Leadership Skills for Board Members: A Guidebook for Board Members of Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org.

- Offers nonprofit boards practical ideas on becoming more effective leaders in their organization. Helps to establish solid operating procedures, resolve conflicts, and manage during difficult times.

Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices. Drucker, Peter Ferdinand, et al. Paperback. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Managing A Nonprofit Organization in the Twenty- First Century. Wolf, Thomas and Barbara Carter. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

The Nonprofit Handbook. Grobman, Gary M. (Introduction) and Joe Geiger. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Nonprofit Kit for Dummies (With CD-ROM). Hutton, Stan, and Frances Phillips. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Reinventing Your Board: A Step-By-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance (The Jossey-Bass Nonprofit Sector Series). Carver, John, and Miriam Mayhew Carver. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Roots of Justice: Stories of Organizing in Communities of Color. Salomon, Larry. Web citation: www.grassrootsfundraising.org/titles/roots.html.

The Self-Sustaining Nonprofit: Planning for Success: A Common Sense Guide from Start-Up Through Year 3. Rutter, E. Jane. Web citation: www.amazon.com

Sound Financial Management: An Overview of Basic Accounting and Financial Principles for Nonprofit Community Development Organizations. The Enterprise Foundation. Web citation: www.enterprisefoundation.org

- Explains the elements of good financial management, including financial reporting, internal controls, and tax-exempt status.

Special Events: Proven Strategies for Nonprofit Fund Raising. Wendroff, Alan L. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization: A Legal Guide (Wiley Nonprofit Law, Finance, and Management Series). Hopkins, Bruce R. Web citation: www.amazon.com.

Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook. Allison, Michael, et al. Web citation: www.amazon.com/

Web sites

Actions Without Borders (www.idealists.org)
This site provides a searchable database of 30,000 nonprofit Web sites, nonprofit news sites, jobs and volunteer opportunities, and resources for nonprofit managers. The Web site helps identify potential partners and funding for centers.

Community Resource Center

(www.crcamerica.org)

The Community Resource Center is a nonprofit organization that provides leadership training, technical assistance, and consulting services to individuals, nonprofit organizations, and community-based coalitions in Colorado and throughout the United States. The Web site contains links to Internet resources and programs for nonprofits.

Community Tool Box

(<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>)

Community Tool Box is a Web site created and maintained by the University of Kansas Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development in Lawrence, Kansas, and

AHEC/Community Partners in Amherst, Massachusetts.

How-to tools explain in simple, friendly language the different tasks necessary for community health and development. There are sections on leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, capacity building, advocacy, grant writing, and evaluation, among others. Each section includes a description of the task, advantages of doing it, step-by-step guidelines, examples, checklists of points to review, and training materials.

In addition, it contains links to helpful Web pages and listservs in areas such as funding, health, education, and community issues; a trouble shooting guide; and a community grant application for preparing requests for funders.

CompassPoint Nonprofit Services (formerly Support Center for Nonprofit Management)
(www.compasspoint.org)

CompassPoint is a nonprofit training, consulting, and research organization with offices in San Francisco and Silicon Valley. Through a broad range of services, it provides nonprofits with the management tools, concepts, and strategies necessary to shape change in their communities. The mission of CompassPoint Nonprofit Services is to increase the effectiveness and impact of people working and volunteering in the nonprofit sector. Its leadership and services are local, regional, and national in scope, and support the growth of an effective nonprofit sector essential to healthy communities.

The Enterprise Foundation
(www.enterprisefoundation.org)

The foundation rebuilds communities by working with partners (community-based nonprofit organizations, state and local governments) to provide low-income people with affordable housing, safer streets, and access to jobs and childcare. It seeks to help strengthen nonprofit organizations working in community development. The Enterprise Foundation Web site includes a large database of resources for low-income housing and

community development organizations, as well as many useful publications.

Fundsnet Online (www.fundsnet.services.com)

The Web site provides links to fundraising resources categorized by type (education, government, etc.), region, and state. The site also includes grant centers.

GrassrootsFundraising.org

(www.grassrootsfundraising.org/index.html)

This Web site provides online resources from the Grassroots Fundraising Journal and ChardonPress.com. The *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* helps nonprofit organizations learn how to raise more money to support their important work. The bimonthly *Journal* offers practical, how-to instruction on fundraising strategies such as direct mail, special events, major gift campaigns, and phone-a-thons, as well as tools to help you build a board of directors that is willing to raise money, choose a database to track donors, manage your time effectively, and ultimately develop a successful fundraising program. Copublisher Kim Klein is a nationally known fundraiser, trainer, and author (best known for *Fundraising for Social Change*) who specializes in training organizations that are working for social justice and have budgets of less than one million dollars. The Web site features archived journal articles, a catalog of books and other publications, advice columns, and an e-newsletter on fundraising and workshop schedules.

Guidestar (www.guidestar.org)

Guidestar provides a free searchable database of reports on the programs and finances of more than 850,000 nonprofit organizations. The site also features nonprofit news, organization profiles, and short articles on giving.

HandsNet (www.handsnet.org)

This Web site aims to bring the human services community online. It provides nonprofit news, links, and nonprofit resources.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The IRS' list of tax-exempt organizations is available online at www.irs.ustreas.gov. You can search or download the complete list of

more than 500,000 tax-exempt organizations (use the “search forms and publications” box to find “*Publication 78*”). This site also provides nonprofit tax information and downloadable IRS forms.

National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA) (www.ncna.org)

NCNA is a network of 37 state and regional associations of nonprofits representing more than 21,000 nonprofits throughout the country. This site lists nonprofit associations categorized by state. Listings include contact information and many Internet addresses.

Nonprofit Nuts & Bolts Online

(www.nutsbolts.com)

This Web site is a one-stop resource for nonprofits. The site links to organizations that include the Association for Volunteer Administration; information for nonprofits offering fundraising and grants information; the National Center for Nonprofit Boards; and the U.S. Nonprofit Gateway that describes grants, budget, and partnership information. The site also links to nonprofit discussion sites.

Philanthropy Journal Online

(www.philanthropyjournal.org). The

Philanthropy Journal is an online publication addressing philanthropy news, issues and organizations. Visitors can search for specific articles that are updated weekly.

Together Foundation/UN-HABITAT United Nations Human Settlements Programme

This searchable database contains over 1,600 proven solutions from more than 140 countries to the common social, economic, and environmental problems of an urbanizing world. It demonstrates the practical ways in which public, private and civil society sectors are working together to improve governance, eradicate poverty, provide access to shelter, land, and basic services, protect the environment, and support economic development.

The database is a powerful tool for:

- Analyzing current trends and emerging issues;
- Networking with the people and organizations involved in implementation;
- Capacity-building including new knowledge management tools and methods;
- Technical cooperation through the matching of supply with demand for proven expertise and experience; and
- Policy development based on what works.

U.S. Department of Housing’s Office of Planning and Community Development

(www.hud.gov/whatwork.html)

HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development maintains this Web site that links to a range of public, private, and nonprofit Web sites highlighting effective community programs.

VolunteerMatch (www.volunteermatch.org)

VolunteerMatch is a nonprofit, online service that helps interested volunteers get involved with community service organizations throughout the United States. Volunteers enter their ZIP code on the VolunteerMatch Web site to quickly find local volunteer opportunities matching individual interests and schedules. Organizations can register as a VolunteerMatch member in order to be referred to volunteers with matching interests and locations. This simple, effective service has already generated hundreds of thousands of volunteer referrals nationwide.

Neighborhood Networks Information

For more information about Neighborhood Networks, visit the Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743, or TTY at (800) 483-2209. The Web site contains valuable information for centers including:

Databases

- **Centers**
Information about operating centers and those in planning stages. Neighborhood Networks centers across the United States are listed geographically by state.
- **News**
Articles, press releases, success stories, and grand openings relevant to Neighborhood Networks.
- **Properties**
Information about Neighborhood Networks properties, listed geographically by state.
- **Resources**
Information about funding, technical assistance, publications, and Web site resources.

Lists

- **Conferences**
Calendar of conferences and training events.
- **Consortia**
List of Neighborhood Networks consortia.

- **Coordinators**
List of Neighborhood Networks coordinators.
- **Resident Associations**
List of Neighborhood Networks properties with active resident associations.
- **Senior Properties**
List of senior properties with operational Neighborhood Networks centers.

Online Networking

Talk with Neighborhood Networks staff and stakeholders via online networking.

Publications

- **Fact sheets.** Fact sheets are one-page summaries of various topics relevant to the operations of Neighborhood Network centers. Fact sheets currently available include an overview of the initiative, telehealth programs, health information, health partnerships, childcare, transportation, seniors, and community improvements at Neighborhood Network centers.
- ***Network News*** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights national achievements for a wide audience, including partners and the public.
- ***NNewsline*** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks centers and coordinators.

